

The main incident of the poem is the tournament for the last of the nine great diamonds found by Arthur Lancelot's refusal to go, and his after-deception indicate his progressive degradation through

"The great and guilty love he bore the Queen."

He is still the greatest of Arthur's Knights; but his innate nobility and uprightness are gradually being riven with infidelity. Having proved traitor to his King, Guinivere's growing jealousy alarms him lest, having forfeited his rights to Arthur's confidence, he should also lose the favor of the Queen. Faithful though faithless, Elaine cannot move him, and a presentiment of coming evil wears upon him. Elaine, too, though in a less degree, is governed rather by her emotions than by her reason. Common sense would have told her that her love for Lancelot was useless, futile, and unreasonable; but philosophy has little more power to rule Elaine than it has over other mortals.

—"And the dead,

Steer'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood,"—

the consummation of the story. It is a fitting climax, dirge-like but not harsh. The dark-draped barge floats up the dark flowing river, under cool, brown banks, dim with trees, out past the broad meadows, where the hawk circles with lazy wing fanning the air, past the humming city to the palace of the King.

"Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
At last the Queen herself and pitied her."

The letter carried by Elaine satisfied the wonder of the court, and Guinivere's jealousy is appeased; yet Lancelot is filled with forebodings, and a gnawing pain of remorse is at his heart. The sombre cloud which has been gathering about his head, seems to break in destructive torrents, and our alarm is only half quieted by the last lines,—

"So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man."

"Elaine" is a quiet poem. Though there is a majesty about verse and action, and events of gravest import, yet there is a peaceful shade over the whole; whether real, or only the haze belonging to distance

The life is so evidently that of another age and land than ours, and the circumstances so different, that it is impossible to think of the poem as other than the creature of imagination—beautiful and per-

fect of its kind, but too unreal to excite. Such legends are, in truth, "castles in the air;" but they are not built with the flaming glories of sunset, but of the fleeting cloud—shapes of midday; formless though lovely, transient resting-places for the eye before it strives to sound the infinite blue beyond. The object is not didactic, and their intellectual element, but animates the idealized vision of the creative mind.

MAGAZINE LITERATURE.

Born early in the eighteenth century, in about one hundred years the Magazine reached its noontide splendour. "The Gentlemen's Magazine," the first published in England, appeared in 1731. The streamlet thus started has flowed onward, gathering strength and volume until to-day it occupies no inconsiderable place in the great body of Literature. The Magazine reached its meridian splendour when the Edinburgh Review was enriched by the Essays of Macaulay, and when his works drew forth the criticisms of a Trevellyn and of a rising Gladstone. These were, in truth, the brilliant days of the Magazine. In a sense the Magazine of that day possessed a power it can no longer wield. Almost of itself it could make or mar an author's fame. When Dr. Johnson and his friends gathered at the Coffee House to discuss literary topics, their decision held sway. If they depreciated the work of a poet or of an essayist the blow fell sure, if they turned their harps to his praises every chord responded to the master's touch.

But such potency for the magazine is of the past. In the present reading and thinking age, no longer is an author's fame made or marred by a single review article. Public intelligence has reached too high a level for this, besides, the magazine itself has changed. When the magazine expressed the thoughts of Macaulay and his co-labourers, whose essays fathomed the very depths of literature and pierced to the very foundations of society and of life, then, indeed, was the magazine well worthy of the high place held by it in literary circles.

But with the growth of the demand for live and representative literature, a change has come over the literary world. Men have peered into all realms of thought and brought from them treasures, both new and old, with which humanity's store has been enriched.